

Message Text

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TAGS: SREF, EAID, AO

SUBJ: REFUGEE OPERATIONS LUANDA - PROBLEM

REF: A. STATE 240788;

B. LUANDA 1518;

C. LUANDA 1520;

SECSTATE FOR AID FOREIGN DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

1. SUMMARY: PREVIOUS MESSAGES HAVE TOUCHED UPON SOME OF
ORGANIZATIONAL, COORDINATION, LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS WHICH PLAGUE
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EVACUATION FROM LUANDA. THIS MESSAGE DESCRIBES IN MORE DETAIL

THE MAJOR PROBLEMS AS WE SEE THEM. WE HAVE SUGGESTED SPECIFIC CHANGES AND OFFERED OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS WHERE APPROPRIATE, BUT WE DO NOT THINK THAT ADDITIONAL U.S. MATERIAL SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF AIRCRAFT IS EITHER REQUIRED OR APPROPRIATE. WHAT IS REQUIRED IS FOR THE GOP HERE TO PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP AND ASSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL, RESOURCES, AND CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE EVACUATION. WE SUSPECT THIS WILL HAPPEN BUT IN A PORTUGUESE RATHER THAN A U.S. TIME FRAME. END SUMMARY.

2. RELUCTANT EVACUEES: AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THE LUANDA-AREA EVACUEES APPEAR TO BE RELUCTANT TO MAKE THE DECISION TO LEAVE NOW RATHER THAN LATER. THE RELUCTANCE APPARENTLY ARISES FROM LACK OF CONFIDENCE THAT THEIR HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS, AUTOS, ETC, WILL BE SHIPPED TO PORTUGAL IF THEY DEPART FIRST. THEY FIND IT EASY TO POSTPONE THEIR DEPARTURE DATE BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOTHING IN PORTUGAL THAT COMPELS AN EARLIER RATHER THAN A LATER ARRIVAL AND BECAUSE THEY SENSE NO IMMEDIATE SECURITY THREAT HERE. WERE THE SECURITY SITUATION TO DE-STABILIZE SUDDENLY, THEY PROBABLY WOULD DECIDE TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. THEY MAY DO SO ALSO IF THEY BECOME CONVINCED THAT FAILURE TO REPORT WHEN THEIR FLIGHTS ARE CALLED REALLY MEANS INELIGIBILITY FOR EVACUATION. BARRING A BREAKDOWN IN THE SECURITY SITUATION OR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CREDIBILITY IN THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENTS ON THE EVACUATION, LUANDA-AREA EVACUEES MAY CONTINUE TO WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT IN HOPES THAT THEIR EFFECTS WILL BE SHIPPED. THIS MAY BE A FORLORN HOPE BECAUSE DOCK WORKERS REPORTEDLY ARE ENGAGED IN SOME KIND OF A SLOWDOWN AND THE ROAD TO THE DOCKS IS CLOGGED WITH TRUCKS FULL OF PACKED HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS.

3. LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION: THE QUESTION "WHO'S IN CHARGE?" IS ONE WE ASK FREQUENTLY, BUT WE HAVE YET TO RECEIVE A SATISFACTORY ANSWER. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S COORDINATOR IS LT. COL. GONCALVES RIBEIRO, BUT THIS IS AN ADDITIONAL DUTY FOR HIM AND OOV ON WHICH HE CANNOT SPEND SUFFICIENT TIME. GONCALVES RIBEIRO HAS SOME CLOUT BUT APPARENTLY NOT ENOUGH TO FORCE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY VEHICLES AND PERSONNEL. GONCALVES RIBEIRO HAS DELEGATED OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO A MAJOR VIEGES WHO HAS NO CLOUT AND IS OF LIMITED COMPETENCE. ANTONIO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RIBEIRO, THE CHIEF IARN OFFICIAL, IS AN INTELLIGENT, COMPETENT PERSON WHO APPEARS TO HAVE UNLIMITED FUNDS TO SPEND IN SUPPORT OF THE OPERATION BUT WHO CONFESSES THAT HE CANNOT GET SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FROM TAP OR OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE GOP. MANUEL RIBEIRO, PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL EVACUATION COMMITTEE, HAS RESIGNED EFFECTIVE TODAY IN ORDER TO PREPARE TO RETURN TO PORTUGAL. A REPLACEMENT HAS BEEN DESIGNATED BUT HE IS NOT GOING TO HAVE ANY MORE REAL AUTHORITY THAN RIBEIRO DID. CARLOS REIS, THE TAP

MANAGER FOR ANGOLA APPEARS TO BE UNINTERESTED, INCOMPETENT, OR BOTH. TAP SIMPLY IS NOT TAKING GREAT PART IN THE EVACUATION EFFORT HERE, NOT EVEN TO THE POINT OF ASSURING THAT THE COMMITTEE UNDERSTANDS CLEARLY WHAT AIRCRAFT WILL ARRIVE AND WHEN. THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM IS A SERIOUS ONE BOTH AT THE POLICY/RESOURCES/ ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL AND AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL. JUST WHO DOES WHAT AND WHEN AND HOW OPERATIONALLY SEEMS TO BE LARGELY A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE. THERE ARE DESIGNATED OPERATIONS CHIEFS BUT THEY ARE GIVEN TO DISAPPEAR FOR HOURS AT A TIME OR TO INVOLVING THEMSELVES IN SUCH TASKS AS THE SEATING OF PASSENGERS, SO THERE SIMPLY IS NO SOURCE OF CONTROL OR DIRECTION IN EVACUATION OPERATIONS AT THE AIRPORT.

4. PERSONNEL: THERE SIMPLY ARE NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE AT THE AIRPORT TO PROCESS EFFICIENTLY THE PRESENT FLOW OF PASSENGERS, LET ALONE A MUCH HIGHER NUMBER. VOLUNTEERS SHOW UP ON A HAPHAZARD BASIS AND PITCH IN WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED OR WHERE THEY PREFER TO WORK, SOME NIGHTS THERE ARE TWENTY PEOPLE TO ASSIST AT THE AIRPORT, AND SOME NIGHTS THERE ARE ONLY FOUR OR FIVE. NONE HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE IN PASSENGER PROCESSING AND MOVEMENT BUT EACH ONE HAS IDEAS ON HOW TO IMPROVE A SEGMENT OF THE OPERATION AND IS GIVEN TO IMPLEMENT HIS OWN IDEAS WITHOUT CONSULTATION OR COORDINATION. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO HAVE DIFFERENT VOLUNTEERS DECIDING TO PUT PASSENGERS ON DIFFERENT AIRCRAFT AT THE SAME TIME, WITH THE RESULT BEING TWO OR THREE AIRCRAFT SITTING ON THE TARMAC WITH PARTIAL LOADS. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS WITH TAP MANAGEMENT HERE, POINTING OUT THAT THE SITUATION CRIES FOR EXPERIENCED AIRLINE PERSONNEL WHO KNOW HOW TO GET AN AIRPLANE LOADED AND BOARDED QUICKLY. THEY AGREE BUT INSIST THAT THE PERSONNEL SITUATION IN TAP/LISBON IS SO CHAOTIC AND UNDISCIPLINED THAT THEY CANNOT HOPE TO GET THEIR EMPLOYEES TO COME TO LUANDA.

5. PROCESSING FACILITIES: ALL EVACUEES FROM LUANDA AREA ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FLIGHT PROCESSED THROUGH SMALL MILITARY TERMINAL OF LUANDA AIRPORT. TERMINAL ALSO BEING USED TO PROCESS TWO DAILY FLIGHTS OF PORTUGUESE MILITARY RETURNEES. THERE IS SINGLE TWO LANE ROAD LEADING INTO TERMINAL AND SMALL PARKING/UNLOADING AREA IN FRONT OF TERMINAL ENTRANCE. IF WE GET TO POINT AT WHICH 2-3,008 LUANDA AREA EVACUEES ARE TO BE MOVED DAILY, WE WOULD EXPECT THE OPERATION TO BREAKDOWN COMPLETELY, TERMINAL AT BEST CAN HOLD 500 PEOPLE, AND MOVEMENT OF PASSENGERS AND BAGGAGE THROUGH TERMINAL WOULD BE PAINFULLY SLOW. AUTOMOBILE CONGESTION OUTSIDE OF TERMINAL WOULD BE SO HEAVY THAT WE DOUBT THAT THERE WOULD BE VEHICULAR ACCESS TO TERMINAL AFTER FIRST DAY. WE HAVE SUGGESTED THAT PROCESSING POINT BE SHIFTED EITHER TO CT IL TERMINAL OR TO OTHER LARGE FACILITY NEAR AIRPORT. CIVIL TERMINAL APPARENTLY CANNOT BE USED BECAUSE LOCAL AUTHORITIES FEAR THIS WOULD INVITE INVOLVEMENT OF MPLA PERSONNEL IN PROCESSING, INCLUDING BAGGAGE

INSPECTION, ETC. CONGEN WAS TOLD BY HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE OCTOBER 9 THAT ANOTHER FACILITY WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION BUT COMMITTEE MEMBERS FEAR THAT THIS TOO WOULD ENABLE MPLA TO BECOME INVOLVED AT LEAST TO POINT OF DECIDING WHAT CAN AND WHAT CANNOT BE TAKEN OUT OF COUNTRY BY EVACUEES.

6. BAGGAGE HANDLING: AT THIS TIME ALMOST ALL EVACUEE BAGGAGE IS BEING LOADED ON AIRCRAFT BY EVACUEES THEMSELVES. TAP/LUANDA INSISTS THAT IT HAS NO CONTROL OVER ITS BAGGAGE-HANDLING CREWS, THAT ABSENTEE RATE AND WORK SLOWDOWN ARE SUCH THAT EVEN COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS CANNOT BE HANDLED IN LESS THAN SEVERAL HOURS. TAP MANAGERS HAVE TOLD US THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO HIRE MORE BAGGAGE HANDLERS TO TAKE SOME OF EVACUEE BAGGAGE IF THEY HAD ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD RESOLVE PROBLEM. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS, THEY INSIST, ADDITIONAL BAGGAGE HANDLES WOULD ONLY LEAD TO LARGER PAYROLL BUT NOT TO INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF TAP HANDLED BAGGAGE. AS AN ALTERNATIVE, WE HAVE SUGGESTED USING MILITARY PERSONNEL TO HANDLE BAGGAGE. LOCAL COMMITTEE RESISTS THIS BECAUSE EARLIER, WHEN MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE USED, COMMITTEE DISCOVERED THEY WERE LOADING AIRPLANES WITH MILITARY BAGGAGE AND EQUIPMENT RATHER THAN WITH PASSENGER BAGGAGE. UTILIZATION OF EVACUEES TO LOAD THEIR OWN BAGGAGE IS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DELAY OF PASSENGER BOARDING BECAUSE FAMILIES OF MEN SO EMPLOYED REFUSE TO BOARD PLANES WITHOUT THEIR HUSBANDS AND FATHERS. COMMITTEE HAS TRIED TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM BY RECRUITING BAGGAGE HANDLERS FOR ONE FLIGHT FROM A LATER FLIGHT, BUT EVACUEES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL NOT VOLUNTEER TO LOAD UNLESS THEY ARE ALSO LOADING THEIR OWN BAGGAGE. ENTIRE PROCESS IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY FACT THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO BAGGAGE TRUCKS AS DISPOSITION OF COMMITTEE. EVEN IF PERSONNEL PROBLEMS ARE RESOLVED, BAGGAGE LOADING WILL STILL DELAY FLIGHTS UNTIL THERE ARE SUFFICIENT TRUCKS TO ALLOW ALL PASSENGER BAGGAGE TO BE ON TRUCK BEFORE FLIGHT ARRIVES. WE ESTIMATE MINIMUM OF 12 TRUCKS ARE NEEDED. CONGEN HAS MADE THIS POINT TO HIGH COMMISSIONER.

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7. TRANSPORTATION: GROUND TRANSPORTATION IS A PROBLEM IN TWO RESPECTS. IF REFUGEES FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ARRIVE IN LUANDA IN NUMBERS, THEY HAVE TO BE MOVED BY BUS TO THE REFUGEE CENTER AND THEN FROM THE REFUGEE CENTER TO THE AIRPORT BY THE SAME BUSES. THREE DIFFERENT AUTHORITIES HAVE GIVEN US THREE DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF BUSES INVOLVED, SO WE ASSUME THERE ARE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SIX AND TWELVE. IF A SHIP IS NOT ARRIVING, THE NUMBER OF BUSES AVAILABLE MAY BE SUFFICIENT TO MOVE PASSENGERS FROM THE CENTER TO THE AIRPORT RAPIDLY ENOUGH. HOWEVER, WHEN A SHIP DOES ARRIVE, THE BUSES ARE DEDICATED TO MOVING THE PASSENGERS FROM THE SHIP TO THE CENTER, AND MOVEMENT FROM THE CENTER TO THE AIRPORT STOPS. THE OTHER APPARENT GROUND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM IS IN THE MOVEMENT FROM THE AIRPORT PROCESSING CENTER TO THE AIRCRAFT. THE PROCESSING CENTER IS A GOOD DISTANCE FROM THE TARMAC AND AIRPORT AUTHORITIES INSIST THAT PASSENGERS BE BUSED. THERE ARE TWO TAP BUSES AVAILABLE TO MOVE THE PASSENGERS FOR EVACUATION FLIGHTS AND THAT IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR THE NUMBERS OF EVACUEES WE ARE TOLD HAVE TO BE

MOVED BY OCTOBER 31. MOREOVER, TAP PULLS THE BUSES OUT OF THE EVACUATION OPERATION WHENEVER THEY ARE NEEDED TO SERVICE AN INBOUND OR OUTBOUND COMMERCIAL FLIGHT, THUS PARALYZING THE EVACUATION FOR THIRTY MINUTES OR SO.

8. THERE ARE OTHER MINOR BUT NAGGING AND DISRUPTING PROBLEMS, SUCH AS NO TELEPHONE SERVICE AT THE AIRPORT STAGING AREA, THE AVAILABILITY OF ONLY ONE VEHICLE TO RUN MESSAGES BETWEEN THE STAGING AREA AND THE AIRCRAFT, THE SEEMING IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONFIRMING ETAS OF AIRCRAFT AND SHIPS OR OF SPACING THE ARRIVAL OF AIRCRAFT, ETC, WE SUSPECT THAT THESE, AS WELL AS ALL OTHERS DESCRIBED IN FOREGOING PARAGRAPHY, WILL BE RESOLVED IN A PORTUGUESE MANNER ONCE THE GOP HERE DECIDES THAT THEY HAVE TO BE RESOLVED. UNTIL THEN THEY WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AS HIGH OBSTACLES TO AN EFFICIENT AND ORDERLY EVACUATION PROCESS. WE SEE NO APPROPRIATE ROLE FOR THE USG HERE OTHER THAN TO POINT OUT THE PROBLEM, RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS AND MAKE CLEAR THAT MORE AIRCRAFT WILL HELP ONLY IF EXISTING AVAILABLE AIRCRAFT ARE BETTER UTILIZED.

9. EMBASSY LISBON AND MAC CAN HELP IN CORRECTING TWO WEAKNESSES IN OUR OWN PART OF THIS OPERATION. AS WE HAVE REQUESTED PREVIOUSLY, LISBON COULD ENSURE THAT TAP FULFILLS ITS OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE ONE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING CREW MEMBER FOR EACH USG-FUNDED FLIGHT WHO COULD GIVE FLIGHT INSTRUCTIONS IN A LANGUAGE THE EVACUEES UNDERSTAND AND OTHERWISE IMPROVE PASSENGER-CREW COMMUNICATIONS. AS WE HAVE ALSO REQUESTED, MAC COULD ENSURE THAT SEABOARD AND ANY OTHER CONTRACT CARRIERS EMPLOYED IN THIS OPERATION STATION A REP IN LUANDA TO ORGANIZE PASSENGERS AND BAGGAGE BEFORE THE AIRCRAFT ARRIVE, ETC. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE AIRLINE REPS WAS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE OPERATION AT NOVA LISBOA AND COULD HAVE THE SAME EFFECT HERE, AT LEAST WITH RESPECT TO USG PARTICIPATION.

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